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RUCNFB/FBI WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 DHAKA 000263

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [PINS](#) [ETRD](#) [ECON](#) [BG](#)

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER CONCERNED ABOUT HER GOVERNMENT'S  
FUTURE, SEEKS USG SUPPORT

REF: A. DHAKA 259

[1](#)B. DHAKA 260

Classified By: Ambassador James Moriarty, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

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[1](#)1. (S) Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina remains worried about the fate of her government in the wake of the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) mutiny. In a March 11 meeting with the Ambassador, she again requested FBI support for the mutiny investigation, noting that getting to the truth was important not only for Bangladesh but also for the region and the world. She criticized politicians and those in the military who were second-guessing her handling of the mutiny. She continues to believe the mutiny was the result of a conspiracy to destabilize her government, though she admitted she still had no concrete evidence. She said she was looking at ways to reconstitute the BDR and to improve civil-military relations in Bangladesh and welcomed USG input to these efforts. Hasina informed the Ambassador she recently learned the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) had been funding the terrorist-linked Islamic Democratic Party (IDP). She also criticized Bangladesh's civil service and police for being non-responsive and only out to take bribes. The Ambassador expressed USG support for Bangladesh's democratically-elected government and for a transparent investigation into the mutiny.

HASINA DESCRIBES TENSE NEGOTIATIONS...  
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[1](#)2. (C) Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina opened her March 12 meeting with the Ambassador (their first meeting since the mutiny) by expressing grief and disbelief at the savagery of the February 25-26 mutiny by soldiers in the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR), the paramilitary force charged with securing Bangladesh's borders. She reported that rampaging jawans, or soldiers, had brutally killed 58 Army officers and several civilians. According to Hasina, her priority throughout the two-day ordeal was to pacify the mutineers and convince them to lay down their arms and surrender with as little bloodshed as possible. It was not until after the mutineers surrendered late on February 26 that Hasina and her advisers learned of the extent of the violence the jawans had inflicted on most of their officers, 43 of whom escaped.

[1](#)3. (C) Hasina vehemently disputed claims the bloodshed could

have been avoided if only she had sent in the Army early on February 25 instead of waiting until the afternoon of February 26. She said some, including Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia, former President H.M. Ershad (Ref A) and a variety of Army officers, claimed the Army could have been in place in less than an hour, thereby saving many lives. (NOTE: All indications are that the victims died within the first two hours of the mutiny. END NOTE.) Hasina said she strongly doubted the Army could have been in place that quickly with the required weapons, including tanks and armored personnel carriers. She also noted that many BDR soldiers had experienced exchanges of fire across Bangladesh's border with India and questioned whether the appearance of the Army when tensions were so high would have immediately resulted in the mutineers laying down their arms in fear, as some critics claimed.

14. (C) According to Hasina, the negotiators she sent to calm the jawans did so at great personal risk. "I sent them into the tiger's cage," she said. Home Minister Sahara Khatun and other government officials entered BDR headquarters unarmed and greatly outnumbered by the mutineers. Hasina said her negotiators worked throughout the night of February 25-26 both to convince the jawans to lay down their arms as well as rescue hostages. (Ref B)

...AND CONTINUES TO BLAME A "DEEP-SEATED" CONSPIRACY  
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15. (C) The Prime Minister said she was convinced that such a savage incident could only be the result of a "deep-seated conspiracy" to destabilize her government and cause a civil

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war. When questioned by the Ambassador, she admitted there was no proof of this, yet. Hasina criticized her rival, Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition Begum Khaleda Zia, and Hasina's alliance partner, Jatiya Party leader and former President H.M. Ershad, for criticizing rather than supporting the PM during this national crisis. Hasina speculated the two politicians were using this tragedy to strengthen themselves and weaken her.

USG RESPONSE  
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16. (C) The Ambassador outlined for the Prime Minister several actions the U.S. Government had taken to demonstrate its support for Bangladesh's democratically-elected government. The Ambassador noted he had spoken with numerous government, political and military leaders, including Begum Zia and Ershad, urging all to support Bangladesh's democratic system in its hour of crisis. He also described the assessment completed by the visiting Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) team, observing there appeared to be several areas where the FBI could provide technical assistance. The Ambassador said USG leaders in Washington were currently mulling over what additional support the United States might be able to provide.

17. (C) Profuse in her appreciation of USG support, the Prime Minister noted how much it had contributed to a quick resolution to the mutiny. She urged FBI experts to return to Bangladesh soon, saying how important international expertise would be to finding the truth and establishing public confidence in the findings. She warned of dire consequences if the investigations were not satisfactorily resolved. The Ambassador, for his part, emphasized the importance of a transparent investigation and highlighted that no evidence of an outside conspiracy had yet come to light.

18. (C) In a private discussion with the Ambassador at the end of the meeting, the Prime Minister said she would welcome USG assistance in helping Bangladesh to strengthen civil-military relations. The Ambassador described U.S. fora

for training and discussions of these principles, including the Asia Pacific Center of Security Studies (APCSS) in Hawaii. The PM asked the Ambassador to share any concrete suggestions we had for establishing a civil-military dialogue that could identify the proper role and vision for the military in Bangladesh.

#### BANGLADESH INTEL, POLICE AND CIVIL SERVICE INCOMPETENT

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¶9. (S) The Prime Minister criticized her intelligence agencies, claiming they were not sharing information with her. For example, she said she recently learned that the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) had been funneling money to the nascent Islamic Democratic Party (IDP), which had ties to the Bangladesh branch of the terrorist group Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HUJI-B), apparently in a misguided attempt to keep the IDP in the open where it could be more easily monitored. The Prime Minister called support for a group that was merely a front for terrorists "crazy" and reported she had immediately ordered the DGFI to stop the funding.

¶10. (C) She also voiced frustration with the police and civil service, claiming most were simply political appointees of the former BNP government who were only interested in collecting bribes. The PM said her Ministers and Secretaries were very upset with the bureaucrats, most of whom obstructed efforts to accomplish GOB priorities. The Prime Minister also said police in many areas of Bangladesh were simply standing aside and not fulfilling their duties to maintain law and order. The police were also keeping her in the dark about events in certain areas. Hasina claimed she had to rely on local party members to keep her informed of important law and order matters outside Dhaka.

#### WORRIES ABOUT ECONOMY

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¶11. (C) The Prime Minister expressed concern about the global economic situation. The Ambassador outlined President Obama's recent steps to revitalize the U.S. economy. He also stressed the importance of a healthy business climate for Bangladesh's economic stability. The Ambassador noted, for example, that pending decisions regarding the activities of foreign-owned shipping companies, including U.S. firm APL, could have ramifications for Bangladesh's exports and its investment climate. If these decisions disadvantaged foreign companies, other foreign investors might have second thoughts about coming to Bangladesh. Just as important, the proposals would raise the cost of transportation for Bangladesh's exports, putting them at a disadvantage in an increasingly competitive global economy. The Prime Minister immediately understood the importance of these issues and promised to look into the matter.

#### COMMENT

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¶12. (C) The Prime Minister we met today was solemn and pre-occupied, a far cry from her good spirits in meetings early this year. She clearly remains fearful about her ability to maintain her government. While there is still no evidence to support the conspiracy theory in which she and her advisers continue to believe, there is no question that the mutiny has weakened her authority and the democratic institutions re-established by December's elections. Strong USG support for this government is key to maintaining democracy and stability in Bangladesh. Without a transparent investigation from the likes of the FBI, speculation surrounding this national tragedy could threaten the survival of Bangladesh's latest democratic experiment.

